

end moves us forward toward better policy, more freedom, greater prosperity, whatever perfections the measure may include are often precisely what are required to bring it to fruition. I fear we are losing sight of these simple truths.

Ironically, factions within the House who are the most adamant in opposing ObamaCare have become, as a practical matter, its most effective defenders. I know they don't intend this to be, but the reality is that ObamaCare survives today solely because of their actions in this House.

Benjamin Franklin was right. In deliberations of this magnitude, it is essential that we each doubt a little of our own infallibility and that we each part with a few of our own demands, in order to join together and produce the reforms that our country depends on us to enact.

A political minority doesn't need to compromise. It has the luxury of standing solely on principle. But the majority, entrusted with making the actual decisions to guide our country to better days, must compromise if it is to make law that will hold together for the centuries.

Lincoln once reminded Congress that we can succeed only by concert. He said: It is not can any of us imagine better, but can we all do better. He urged us to rise to the occasion, to disenthral ourselves, for only then could we save our country.

I hope that some of our colleagues will consider this advice during the Easter recess.

AWARD WINNERS FROM CITGO INNOVATION ACADEMY FOR ENGINEERING, ENVIRONMENTAL & MARINE SCIENCE AT MOODY HIGH SCHOOL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FARENTHOLD) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FARENTHOLD. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Corpus Christi students from the CITGO Innovation Academy for Engineering, Environmental & Marine Science at Moody High School for winning two awards at the Marine Advanced Technology Education International Remotely Operated Vehicle competition recently held at NASA's Johnson Space Center's Neutral Buoyancy Lab in Houston, Texas.

This competition was the final round in a series of science fairs and challenges focusing on underwater technology that can adapt to harsh ocean and space environments.

The AquaBot Technicians robotics team won the Aloha Award for team spirit and friendliness. Natasha Sanchez was named the competition's MVP.

The CITGO Innovative Academy provides students training to become the next generation of science and technology professionals by offering upper level engineering, math, and science courses.

A thank you is due to CITGO for supporting STEM education in Corpus Christi and other areas where they operate.

PRaising THE VETERANS CHOICE PROGRAM

Mr. FARENTHOLD. Mr. Speaker, since first being elected to Congress, I have been fighting for our veterans to get the care they were promised and earned.

After hearing veterans tell horror story after horror story of long wait times, canceled appointments, and having to travel miles to distant cities to get treatment, Congress got something right when they passed the Veterans Choice and Accountability Act in 2014.

It created the Veterans Choice Program that allows any veteran who is unable to obtain an appointment with the VA within 30 days or has to travel more than 40 miles to a VA facility for care to see a private doctor who can see them faster and closer to home.

Though the implementation of the Veterans Choice Program has not been without hiccups, it is proving very helpful for getting veterans faster, more quality care.

I hear time and again from veterans in the district that I represent that this is working for them.

Soon, in fact later today, the House will vote on H.R. 369, to eliminate the sunset of the Veterans Choice Program and ensure the program continues after August 7.

I encourage all my colleagues to vote "yes" on this bill to continue Veterans Choice. I look forward to continuing to hear the great successes it provides for our veterans and for our doctors.

THE COST OF DEFENDING OUR COUNTRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, defense spending was \$348 billion in 2002. Now it is well over \$600 billion a year, and this total does not include the military construction budget which has totaled more than \$181 billion over the last 10 years, and many billions more in supplemental appropriations. There is presently a request for another \$30 billion supplemental appropriations for the military.

On top of all this, almost every year for the 29 years I have been here, there has been an end-of-the-year omnibus appropriations bill which always contains even more for the Defense Department.

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I have always believed that national defense is one the most important, most legitimate functions of the Federal Government. But I am also a fiscal conservative.

With our Nation \$20 trillion in debt and many trillions more in unfunded future Social Security and pensions liability in the years ahead, we desperately need some fiscal conservatives in the Pentagon.

I realize that the easiest thing in the world to do is to spend other people's money; and you can never satisfy any government's appetite for money or land. They always want more. But it is a myth to say or think that the Defense Department is underfunded when defense spending has doubled since 2002.

Yet, even though this spending has gone way up, most people around the country seem to believe it has gone way down. We hear some saying the military has been decimated or has undergone drastic cuts. This has been a masterful public relations job, I assume, by the Pentagon, working with defense contractors and think tanks funded by the defense industry.

Last year, we spent \$177.5 billion for new equipment, tanks, planes, weapons of all sorts. Most of this equipment does not wear out after just 1 year, yet we keep spending similar amounts on new equipment every year.

I mentioned that the military construction funds are in a separate bill, not in the regular Defense Department appropriations bill. The \$181 billion we have appropriated over the last 10 years in this bill means you probably cannot find any military base in the world without new construction going on, and much more than that is only 3 or 4 years old or even newer.

We have a \$20 trillion national debt. Last week, I read in *The Washington Times* that the estimate now is that we will be \$91 trillion in debt 30 years from now. Obviously, if we allow that much debt, we will be printing so much money that our Social Security and military and civil service pensions will be worth very little.

In the biography, "Bonhoeffer," about the famous theologian, by Eric Metaxas, it says that, in 1921, the currency exchange rate was 75 German marks to the dollar. The next year, it was 400 marks to the dollar. Then inflation really took off, and, by early 1923, it was 7,000 to 1.

Metaxas wrote: "The resultant economic turmoil would make the bleak conditions of a few months earlier look like the good old days."

By August, a dollar was worth 1 million marks. The book says: "By the end of 1923, things had become impossible. In October, Dietrich wrote that every meal cost 1 billion marks."

Germany, in the early 1920s, was one of the most educated countries in the world. It is hard to imagine what could happen here in the United States if we continue to spend money we do not have and run trillions more into debt.

With the exception of a brief downturn in 1958, President Eisenhower gave the Nation 8 years of peace and prosperity and balanced budgets, and he looks better with the passage of time. He spent most of his career in the military and loved and respected that institution.

But in a new book called "Ike's Bluff," by Evan Thomas, is this very interesting observation: "Eisenhower